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SOME PROBLEMS IN POST-WAR COUNTY EXTENSION WORK

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All in all, the extension system has served rural people well and we can look back over the years of cooperative extension work with pride of accomplishment, knowing full well that much of the improvement in farming and homemaking rests upon the splendid work of our extension people and the resources of college, station and Department.

However, for some time we have all realized, too, that after more than 30 years of cooperative extension work that we should study the system, its finances, organization, personnel, and programs, to ascertain what adjustments might well be made to better fit the work to the needs of people. Now that we are entering a period of reconversion, of great readjustment in national and world affairs, now that we have before us the means of great expansion in extension personnel because of Bankhead-Flannagan funds, we cannot much longer delay this needed inventory and study. Here today, I shall raise questions which bear on these. For some of these questions you may already have the answers. For others we shall have to study and find suitable answers together.

The first of the questions that comes to us is, shall extension work in the future with expanded personnel be merely more of the same, more service, more subject matter, more teaching of better practices? Though extension through the years has very substantially broadened and enlarged the scope of its activities, we ask whether in general it is still not largely bound by the project philosophy in shaping its programs and teachings. These projects represent the subject matter which the college, the experiment station and

the Department consider fundamental in meeting certain local or area problems of production, marketing, homemaking and home life. Often these projects are highly specialized to meet the problem of special groups.

But for many of us our all too brief experience in land use planning indicates that service and subject matter practices are not enough. Now the Clark Report and the work of the Interbureau Committee, bring fresh and new challenges that we in extension must concern ourselves with public problems. And that the college, station and Department work with us in the determination of large public policies with reference to such problems. Health, medical care, disease control, the changing cotton economy, the millions of part-time and small time farmers, the better use of our water resources, are but a few examples.

So the next immediate question that arises is, are we equipped with basic philosophy and basic facts, with sufficiently well trained personnel to enter these new fields? You already recognize that merely adding more county extension agents, supervisors or specialists, now made possible under the Bankhead-Flannagan Act will not suffice. We need a thorough overhauling of our whole program concept from the president and dean down to the assistant extension agents and the local leaders working with our agents. Unless college and station too work in recognizing great public problems and lead in determining public policies and support our extension workers in their effort to obtain public recognition and action, extension will be comparatively helpless. The college must lead in developing a great agricultural and rural life program for the State, one which does not fear to include questions of public policy for agriculture.

You will recall the statement prepared by Mr. Noble Clark in this regard from which I quote:

"It is especially necessary that those who are responsible for extension policy make certain that in the years ahead their programs give emphasis to these public policy questions. In most states this decision will require broad adjustments in the whole extension program and will necessitate the allocation of more personnel and funds to this field. It will also mean that special attention be given to determining how this type of educational material can best be made available to farmers and their families."

"Administrative protection and financial support for the county extension office should be provided so that extension workers may devote their full time to educational activities among all farmers and may, with discretion and judgment, engage in educational work on broad public issues without endangering their jobs."

It does seem that it is time now for extension to do something about the Clark Committee Report for county extension agents, specialists, supervisors to help local people understand the significance of some of the situations this report outlines and to work positively in developing programs and extension work to carry out some of the recommendations as they may be adapted to the State and various counties.

Thirdly - our extension workers, present and prospective, need better training, training which does consider some of the fundamental large problems of agriculture, and the place of American agriculture in world affairs, as well as training in animal industry, agronomy, home economics, etc. So much

can be done, now that annual extension conferences may be held, to make such conferences center on these larger problems, public policies and ways and means of developing recognition and action in the counties, and follow these with district training conferences. We have made some excellent beginnings in this line. Now with the problems ahead of the Nation, can't we make such effort more intensive, more impressive and helpful. We need to make these beginnings at least, following up as situations permit with persons on the central staff who will help extension agents and specialists modify their programs and plans. But let's begin now and do something.

Another question that always raises itself and yet is never fully met is - does the county extension agent get enough help? In subject matter, probably for the most part, the answer is "yes." But in organizing and systematizing his work, in gaining confidence, support, information and help in tackling some of the larger problems, the answer is still probably "no." In the larger States he is lucky if he gets two or three visits a year from the supervisor. And in theory at least, the latter person is the one who should help him with the problem of problem analysis and diagnosis, overall program making, organization and planned procedure. The letters, bulletins, visits of the specialists, help him a lot in subject matter, but who helps him sufficiently with the larger overall problems of maintaining the most effective county extension force possible? Perhaps we need a new type of person in extension, not a specialist in the ordinary sense but one who has the know how, can work with county extension agents and the lay and professional groups involved to work in developing programs and educational work in the field of these larger problems. Personally I believe it is the job of the supervisor to do this and many supervisors will do this provided the responsibility is given them.

And now we come to another question. With four, five, six, seven and even more extension agents in a county, which will come, how will they be directed most effectively and carry on coordinated work? Will some of the assistant agents be assigned to special projects as in California? How will they arrive at a unified and coordinated program, to use a common and mouth-filling phrase? Is there need, if I can enter where angels fear to tread, for a county overall head? And in the future, is there need for three types of supervisors? And shall we need more supervisors as we gain in numbers of extension agents? What is a supervising load? How much help do our county agents need, and how can we give it to them, or shall we let them sweat it out as in the past?

Again, too, now with more extension agents employed with greater emphasis the question is raised, what should be the relationships of supervisors of county agents, home demonstration agents, and 4-H club, and the specialists in agriculture and home economics. Who is responsible to who and to what? Who will help the agent make the program? Who plans the procedure? Who sees to it that it is carried out? Old questions all of them, but still unanswered in so many areas. But, with increasing numbers of workers, with new and greater problems to be met, it seems we must soon be more definite in defining the duties, responsibilities and relationships involved.

The new funds will allow states to employ agents or assistant agents, to help urban and suburban people with problems of nutrition, food preservation, gardening and home and civic beautification. The help our extension services gave urban people with Victory gardening and home food canning made millions of friends for the extension services and the Department. The need

for these friends continues and the need for more help and information in homemaking and home gardening and food production also remains. There is a great drift of city dwellers to suburban areas or small farms. They will need and will value the help extension can give them. The last Census showed 140 metropolitan districts with a population of 50,000 or more. Each could well employ cooperatively a home demonstration worker and a horticultural agent. The cities like the District of Columbia, Milwaukee, Atlanta, New York City, Syracuse, Buffalo, Boston, Portland, Oregon and others show by the results how the employment of such extension agents is appreciated.

I hope that by all means the extension service will not let the garden work die a slow death. The tremendous interest in gardening, home and civic improvement, home food production, which came with the Victory Garden program is a wonderful base on which to build a continuing program which can only mean great enrichment of life, better food habits, and better health, more beautiful homes, towns, and country, for millions and millions of our people.

The addition of more extension agents in a county should help us also to meet more effectively the problems of the small farmer and the part-time farmer. Nearly 50% of our farms raise less than \$600 worth a year. Even in a State like Oregon, they have found that nearly 50% of their farms are part-time farms and Assistant Director Ballard also said they found out that extension was not helping them much. Nor do our extension programs generally help these classes of our rural citizens much. Beyond the question of subject matter practices lie some deeper problems of public policies.

We are much interested in the development of State plans of work that reflect the attention being given to organizing State programs and State

policies. Two States have submitted one master plan for extension work in the State. That seems a big step in the right direction of building a unified program based on major agricultural and policy problems. To be sure at first such State plans may still bear evidence of being a collection of projects. But they do begin to show a more basic concept of overall farm and home problems and we hope the experiment will continue to grow.

Truly, we are entering a new era of extension work with our increased funds. I think it will be an era when some of the questions raised will be met, with resultant great service to the people. In the great opportunities before us, we of Washington hope we can work with even greater unity and cooperativeness in mutually making the most of these greater opportunities.

